

## **IDAHO ASSOCIATION OF HIGHWAY DISTRICTS**

January 10, 2006

Mr. Jim Kempton, Chairman  
Forum on Transportation Investment  
P.O. Box 7129  
Boise, ID. 83707-1129

Dear Chairman Kempton,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Idaho Association of Highway Districts, I want to thank you for this opportunity to provide a highway district perspective on transportation funding.

There are 64 highway districts in the state, with administrative responsibility for almost 12,000 miles of secondary highways in the state of Idaho. More than 65% of the population of this state resides within a highway district. The stratification of highway districts by road mileage and budget is interesting, and reflective of the diversity of this state. The largest highway district in the state is the Ada County Highway District, with more than 1,800 miles of roads, and a budget in excess of \$65 million. The smallest is the Good Roads District #2, with a budget of less than \$50,000 and 13 miles of road.

Highway districts face unique challenges in providing transportation services to our citizens. Funding levels from the Highway Distribution Account have been "flat lined" since 1999. Further events have significantly limited highway districts funding sources as well. The Idaho Legislature's decision to change the manner for the imposition of developmental impact fees several years ago all but eliminated this source of new funding. Property tax, which is limited to a 3% budget cap, is not sufficient to keep up with demand, especially for those highway districts that practiced budget restraint in the 1970's, by holding the levy rate down during a period of high timber sales. With the reduction of timber harvests and subsequent loss of those funds, several districts face real challenges in maintaining systems at a safe level. The current funding sources for most highway districts has resulted in an emphasis in maintaining existing systems, and not providing increased capacity or new projects in the majority of the districts.

I would also reaffirm my Association's position that any new monies that are generated by the Idaho Legislature be split evenly between the state and the local jurisdictions.

The Association is hopeful that the Idaho Legislature will review the recommendations submitted by the IT Board, and make positive decisions towards the funding of transportation systems in the State of Idaho. I am confident that the final report will demonstrate sufficient data supporting the need for more increased transportation funding.

Having spent the last year in meetings around the state discussing transportation issues, I have learned a great deal about the overall status of the transportation system in Idaho. I acknowledge that we must become more efficient with our transportation dollars, and look for more creative solutions for making these dollars go farther. However, I also see that there is only so much we as policy makers can do with available funds, and quite frankly, I think we are stretched as far as possible under the current state funding mechanisms and local taxing budget constraints.

Again, it was a pleasure to have been given the opportunity to participate in this Forum. I would also like to compliment the team of the Idaho Transportation Department, H.W. Lochner, and Tom Warne and Associates for putting together this very informative and educational forum. I applaud the effort, and appreciated the chance to work with my old friend Dwight Bower again.

Sincerely,

Stuart O. Davis  
Executive Director  
Idaho Association of Highway Districts